

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 SSM-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01
ACDA-12 HA-05 AID-05 CCO-00 MCT-01 /100 W
-----012513 281405Z /45

O R 281313Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7302
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
RUS AAA/USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1673

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 28,1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1644 (DTG 271305Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN SOUTH LEBANON, SCATTERED ARTILLERY
AND SMALL ARMS FIRE CONTINUED. PALESTINIANS PREVENTED A
DETACHMENT OF FRENCH SOLDIERS FROM TAKING UP POSITION AT
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QASIMIYAH BRIDGE NORTH OF TYRE. SA'D HADDAD REPORTEDLY
ANNOUNCED HE WOULD FORM A NEW MIXED ARMY IN SOUTH LEBANON.
ALL BEIRUT PAPERS GAVE PROMINENT PLAY TO: (A) WEIZMAN'S
REPORTED THREAT TO RETALIATE AGAINST CONTINUED
PALESTINIAN ATTACKS; AND (B) SYRIAN DENIALS THAT THE
ADF WOULD MOVE SOUTH TOWARDS THE LITANI. PRIME MINISTER
AL-HOSS VISITED SIDON AND TYRE. CHAMOUN DENIED SADAT'S

CHARGE THAT HE HAD ADVOCATED A MARONITE STATE. SHI'A DEPUTIES MET AND ISSUED PLATITUDINOUS COMMUNIQUE ON SOUTH LEBANON. RAYMONDE EDDE ASKED FOR A CHANGE IN THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON.

A. ACCORDING TO BEIRUT PRESS ACCOUNTS, THERE WERE AGAIN SCATTERED ARTILLERY AND SMALL ARMS EXCHANGES ON MARCH 27, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN PALESTINIANS AT CHATEAU BEAUFORT AND ISRAELIS/CHRISTIANS IN MARJAYUN AND QUL'AYAH.

B. TWO RELIABLE OBSERVERS REPORT THEY SAW AN EMPTY IRAQI SUPPLY CONVOY LEAVING LEBANON ON THE MAIN DAMASCUS ROAD ON MARCH 26.

3. UNIFIL ACTIVITIES.

A. ACCORDING TO U.N. IN BEIRUT, A CONTINGENT OF SWEDISH UNIFIL SOLDIERS HAS SUCCESSFULLY MOVED TO THE BORDER VILLAGE OF MARKABA EVEN THOUGH IT WAS FIRED ON BY PALESTINIANS FROM BEAUFORT CASTLE ON MARCH 25.

B. ON MARCH 27 A DETACHMENT OF 35 FRENCH SOLDIERS FROM TYRE TOOK UP POSITION ABOUT ONE KILOMETER SOUTH OF
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THE QASIMIYAH BRIDGE NORTH OF TYRE. THE FRENCH SOLDIERS HAD WANTED TO STATION THEMSELVES AT THE BRIDGE, BUT HAD BEEN STOPPED BY ABOUT 100 ARMED FEDAYEEN, ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT LE-JOUR. THE PALESTINIANS FIRED A FEW SHOTS OVER THE HEADS OF THE FRENCH, THE NEWS-PAPER REPORTED.

4. SA'D HADDAD'S ARMY.

A. RIGHTIST LE REVEIL ON MARCH 28 CARRIED AN AFP STORY SAYING THAT SA'D HADDAD, LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN SOUTH LEBANON, HAD ANNOUNCED HE WOULD BEGIN A COMPULSORY DRAFT OF ALL MEN IN SOUTH LEBANON BETWEEN 17 AND 45 YEARS-OLD. HE REPORTEDLY EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE WAS TO FORM A "LOCAL ARMY" AND THAT HE WOULD BE ITS "GENERAL."

B. ACCORDING TO AFP, THE DRAFT IS TO BEGIN ON MARCH 28 WITH THE AIM OF BUILDING AN ARMY OF 7,000 MEN INCLUDING CHRISTIANS AND SHIA. THIS ARMY, ACCORDING TO HADDAD, WOULD TAKE OVER DEFENSE OF THE AREA UNTIL THE ARRIVAL OF THE LEBANESE ARMY, WHICH THE "LOCAL ARMY"

COULD THEN JOIN. (COMMENT. BOTH DANY CHAMOUN AND BACHIR GEMAYEL HAVE TOLD US PREVIOUSLY THAT HADDAD IS NOT UNDER THEIR CONTROL, BUT THAT OF ISRAEL.)

5. WEIZMAN ULTIMATUM.

ALL PAPERS ON MARCH 28 GAVE FRONT PAGE PLAY TO STATEMENT OF ISRAELI DEFENSE MINISTER EZER WEIZMAN THAT "THE ISRAELI ARMY WILL TAKE THINGS IN HAND" IF THE PALESTINIANS DID NOT STOP FIRING WITHIN 48 HOURS. INDEPENDENT L'ORIENT LE-JOUR ASKED, "AT A TIME WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING BETTER, ARE WE GOING TO MOVE TOWARDS THE FIFTH ISRAELI-ARAB WAR?"

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6. SYRIAN DENIALS.

ALL PAPERS REPORTED ON MARCH 28 THAT THE SYRIAN MINISTER OF INFORMATION, AHMAD ISKANDAR AHMAD, HAD DENIED A RADIO MONTE CARLO REPORT THAT SYRIAN ADF TROOPS WERE MOVING SOUTH TO TAKE UP POSITIONS ON THE NORTH BANK OF THE LITANI. PAPERS ALSO REPORTED THAT OFFICIAL SYRIAN SOURCES THE SAME DAY HAD STRESSED THAT IT WAS "OUT OF THE QUESTION" THAT SYRIAN FORCES DEPLOY

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ALONG THE NORTH BANK OF THE LITANI TO CONTROL FEDAYEEN ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION.

7. AL-HOSS VISITS TYRE.

PRIME MINISTER SALIM AL-HOSS VISITED SIDON AND TYRE ON MARCH 27. HE INSPECTED CAMPS SET UP TO RECEIVE REFUGEES FROM THE SOUTH AS WELL AS THE BARRACKS WHICH THE FRENCH UNIFIL SOLDIERS ARE USING IN TYRE. AS HE WAS LEAVING TYRE TO RETURN TO BEIRUT, A ROCKET EXPLODED ABOUT 50 METERS FROM HIS CAR.

8. CHAMOUN DENIES SADAT'S ALLEGATIONS.

NLP LEADER CAMILLE CHAMOUN DENIED HE HAD BEEN PLOTTING TO FORM A MARONITE STATE AS ALLEGED BY PRESIDENT ANWAR SADAT IN HIS MARCH 26 INTERVIEW IN OCTOBER MAGAZINE. CHAMOUN REFERRED SARCASTICALLY TO "MR. SADAT'S ARTISTIC GIFTS" AND NOTED "THE SMALL ATTACHMENT OF THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT TO THE STRICT TRUTH." CHAMOUN ALSO AGAIN CONDEMNED THE ARMED PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON AND WARNED THAT THE PALESTINIANS AND "STRANGERS" (I.E. LIBYANS) WERE RE-ENFORCING THEIR POSITIONS IN ASHIYAH, RIHAN, AND NABATIYAH.

9. SHI'A BLOC MEETS.

THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY GROUPING (NPG), A SHI'A BLOC, MET UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF KAMAL AL ASSAD AND ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE WHICH DID NOTHING MORE THAN REITERATE STANDARD PLATITUDES. THE BLOC AFFIRMED THAT "THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE IS ALSO THAT OF LEBANON" AND THAT "ANY ARMED PRESENCE IN LEBANON OR ELSEWHERE MUST BE

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PUT INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF A COMMON ARAB STRATEGY." THE SAME DAY RESIDENTS FROM NABATIYAH CALLED ON ASSAD AND

DEMANDED THAT ALL NON-LEBANESE ARMED MEN LEAVE THE TOWN
AND THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY ENTER.

10. RAYMOND EDDE TELEGRAM.

IN A TELEGRAM FROM PARIS ON MARCH 27 TO MOHAMMED
RIAD, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ARAB LEAGUE, NATIONAL
BLOC LEADER RAYMOND EDDE ASKED THAT THE COMPOSITION
OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE BE CHANGED. EDDE SAID
THE ADF SHOULD "BE COMPOSED OF ELEMENTS FROM SEVERAL
ARAB STATES." (THE ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS
OPENED A MEETING IN CAIRO ON MARCH 27, WHICH INTER
ALIA IS TO DISCUSS RENEWAL OF THE ADF MANDATE, DUE
TO EXPIRE NEXT MONTH.)

11. SECURITY IN WEST BEIRUT.

BOMBINGS AND ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF GUN FIRE CONTINUE
ON A DAILY BASIS IN WEST BEIRUT. ON THE EVENING
OF SUNDAY, MARCH 26, FOR EXAMPLE, UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS
BOMBED A LOCAL PINBALL PARLOR NEXT TO THE AMERICAN
COMMUNITY SCHOOL. THE PARLOR WAS FREQUENTED DURING THE
DAY BY STUDENTS FROM ACS AND INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE.
THERE WAS HEAVY DAMAGE, BUT NO CASUALTIES.
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